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NIGHTLY NEWS

WITH BRIAN WILLIAMS

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TRADING PLACES: CARING FOR YOUR PARENTS

Caring for Dad, with help from some angels

The Williams family relies on the growing elder care industry

NBC VIDEO



• [Trading Places: Caring for aging parents](#)

Feb. 12: It's something so many Americans experience -- caring for aging parents. Here, Brian Williams shares his personal story as part of our special series.

Nightly News

Brian Williams
Anchor & "Nightly News" managing editor
NBC News



Brian Williams
Anchor & "Nightly News" managing editor

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(ON CAMERA INTRO) Tonight we begin a special series called "Trading Places." That title implies the following role reversal: It means all of us who now care for the same parents, who once cared for us.

One in four U.S. households currently provides care for a relative or friend age 50 and over.

When you can't always be there, there's the guilt of not being able to help. That's given rise to a new industry of care: one that our family has come to know, and depend on.

RED BANK, N.J. - In a month, he'll be 90. Born outside Boston when Woodrow Wilson was president, Gordon Williams, my Dad, has survived a heart attack, cancer surgery, a broken hip and hip replacement.

He has outlived his wife of 50 years and two of his four children.

Gordon Williams: You know, you children insisted I sell my car.

Brian Williams: Yeah, sorry about that. It was time, Dad.

These days he needs help simply because the clock has run into overtime.

After selling our home near the Jersey Shore, he wanted to live with others his age, so he happily chose an assisted-living facility just a few miles from home.

Brian Williams: How important is it for your to be independent, to have a place of your own?

Gordon Williams: Oh, it's everything. That's it. Especially the area here and the other assisted living people.

It's only a small efficiency apartment, but this child of the depression won't accept any luxuries.

Gordon Williams: I just like to see - the closeness and everything is right here - in one place.

Brian Williams: Your command center.

Gordon Williams: Yeah, right.

He loves having neighbors to check in on, down the hall.

Gordon Williams: You better just say, 'hello.'

Brian Williams: Betty, are you decent? It's Brian and Gordon.

And he loves seeing his friends in the dining room, and lunching with a fellow World War II veteran.

Joe Byrne: I just think people are living longer. I think people are taking better care of themselves.

Byrne runs the county franchise of Visiting Angels. It's designed to supplement

normal care, sometimes around the clock.

Brian Williams (*to Byrne*): As you know, I couldn't care for my father physically. Thank God I can care for my Dad financially. I know how lucky I am, but I couldn't do it physically, I'm 40 miles away, without you. Are all your clients like me?

Byrne: We have a lot of care recipients, as we affectionately call them, that live in their homes, but the children are out of state. They're worried about them. And you know, everybody today, it's human nature, does not want to think they need help. It's just human nature. But there's a part of everyone down deep that wants help. They just don't know how to ask for it.

The Visiting Angels also help families with finances - reverse mortgages, bill consolidation - it can run into thousands per month, not covered by insurance.

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Brian Williams (*to Dad*): And how about the level of medical care you get?

Gordon Williams: Excellent. I'm right next door to the wellness clinic and the doctor comes twice a week.

Byrne (*to Brian*): Sons and daughters, like yourself, who are miles away, want to go to bed at night knowing their mother and father are in good hands.

Brian Williams: As you know, my dad is a tough old bird.

Byrne: Yes, he is.

Brian Williams: And not every nurse gels with tough old birds.

Byrne: Right. He will call me at different times during the day and say "Joe, we need to talk."

It's a healthcare luxury we are lucky to have, just as we are lucky to have him in our lives.

(ON CAMERA CLOSE) And add to all that - all the people you didn't see who help watch over my Dad: His grandchildren, his son-in-law, even our family friends the Gilroys, who make sure my Dad gets driven wherever he needs.

They are all saints, but none of us can work miracles, and we all need help now and then.

Tuesday on "NBC Nightly News": Tim Russert's efforts to make sure his Dad, 'Big Russ,' has everything he needs.

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